

just news

Texas repeals sodomy statute

The ruling came in a test case brought by five gays and lesbians and a human rights foundation

by Rex Wockner

A district court judge in Austin overturned Texas' "Homosexual Conduct" law Dec. 10, saying it denied gays and lesbians constitutional protections of privacy, due process and equal protection under the law.

Seven other states specifically criminalize gay sex and another 17 outlaw oral, anal and certain other sex acts by anyone.

The ruling by Judge Paul Davis came in a test case brought by five gays and lesbians and the Texas Human Rights Foundation, a gay legal agency. Repeal of the statute, section 21.06 of the state penal code, has been an ongoing goal of Texas activists since 1975, according to Dallas Gay Alliance spokesman William Waybourn. "This won't change the world overnight," Waybourn said, "but at least one more blow has been struck." The law permitted a maximum penalty of only a \$200 fine for "deviant sexual intercourse" between adults of the same sex—specifically "mouth to genital" and "genital to anal" sex. It had not been enforced in the past 10 years, but activists say it hurt them in other ways. Among those who testified at the hour-long trial was Mica England, a lesbian who was denied a position on the Dallas police force last year be-

cause, police said, she had a propensity to engage in conduct that was against state law.

Asked to comment on the ruling, defendant John Thomas exclaimed, "Wow!"

"Many reporters asked me if I am surprised at this liberal ruling," Thomas added, "but actually I consider it a very conservative ruling."

"What it says is the government does not have a place coming into your private life. This ruling allows gay citizens to live lives of integrity and dignity."

Before the trial, state attorney general Jim Maddox told reporters the law was "difficult to defend when it's never been used and therefore serves no purpose. It seems there are a lot more important laws and cases that could be taking up our time," Maddox said.

The state is expected to appeal the ruling, according to THRF spokesman Frank Stenger. The case would go first to an appeals court and then to the state Supreme Court.

"We would just love to get this before the Supreme Court," commented Waybourn. "We have a liberal state Supreme Court."

The other defendants in the case were Pat Cramer, Tom Doyal, Linda Morales and Charlotte Taft.

Immigration bans lifted

U.S. finally welcomes foreign gays and lesbians, HIV positives should be welcome soon as well.

by Rex Wockner

Gays and lesbians of the world, welcome to the United States of America.

President George Bush signed the bill on Nov. 29 recently passed by Congress lifting the 38-year-old ban on homosexual tourists and immigrants.

And in a few weeks, HIV positives should be welcome in America as well. They have been banned from entering our nation since 1987.

Both laws were enforced only sporadically. But since 1952, all homosexuals were technically barred from coming to the United States because they were officially "afflicted with psychopathic personality...or mental defect."

And since 1965, foreign gays and lesbians have been classified as "sexual deviants."

The ban on HIV positives came into being three years ago, pushed through Congress by anti-gay Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.).

Congress and Bush have now instructed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to draw up a new list of contagious diseases that cannot enter the country, and HIV/AIDS will not be among them.

In signing the immigration-reform package,

Bush noted: "This act...revises the politically-related exclusion grounds for the first time since their enactment in 1952. These revised grounds lift unnecessary restrictions on those who may enter the United States. At the same time, they retain important administration checks in the interest of national security as well as the health and welfare of U.S. citizens."

The new regulations also permit more total immigrants to the U.S. and significantly ease restrictions on the Irish, European professionals, Salvadoran refugees, Mexicans with relatives here, and many others.

The repeal of the gay and HIV bans has been a pet project of gay U.S. Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) for years. He is delighted at his success and calls it "a sign of progress that we got [the bans] repealed with so little overt controversy. The haters...that wanted to keep those things on the books understood that we just had them out-gunned," Frank said.

Robert Bray, spokesman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, called the repeal of the bans "the frosting on the cake for gays, lesbians and people with AIDS at the end of a very sweet 101st Congress."

Creating Change

NGLTF stages largest gay political conference ever

by Rex Wockner

In what was likely the largest gay political gathering in history, more than 700 activists from around the nation assembled in Minneapolis Nov. 9-12 for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's (NGLTF) third annual "Creating Change" conference.

An exhaustive schedule of workshops addressed everything from outing and gay marriage to lesbian sex and the battle against fundamentalists.

Key speakers included black feminist writer Barbara Smith; C.T. Vivian, chair of the Center for Democratic Renewal; and lesbian humorist Kate Clinton.

A special appearance was made by Roman Kalinin, founder of the Moscow Gay and Lesbian Union, who is on a nationwide tour to garner support for the emerging Soviet gay movement.

Kalinin said that 800 gay men are imprisoned each year under the Soviet Union's sodomy law, and that the government produces and imports only enough condoms for each sexually active male to buy four per year.

The workshop on outing was among the most

well-attended. Tim Campbell, publisher of the *GLC Voice*, a Minneapolis gay newspaper, said it is a matter of journalistic honesty to report the sexual orientation of public figures who become involved in gay issues.

Campbell also argued that many closeted public figures are not really in the closet — as evidenced by the fact that he has learned they are gay.

Comedian Robin Tyler stressed, "Safety in the closet is over and if anybody is here from the press, say that I said that."

Outing was aggressively denounced by Nancy Buermeier, lesbian rights program director for the National Organization for Women.

She said no one ever has the right to make the coming-out decision for another person.

The overflow audience at the workshop seemed about evenly split between pro- and anti-outing positions — again revealing that the issue is one of the most contentious in recent gay and lesbian history.

This year's conference marked the first time NGLTF moved the gathering outside Washington, D.C.

20%

january 2 - 26

storewide

the winter sale

at art media

(exceptions:

special-tag items

& art media graphic services.) art media,

portland's most complete selection of fine

and graphic art supplies.



902 S.W. Yamhill, Portland OR (503) 223-3724. M-Th 9-8, F-Sat. 9-5:30.